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Middlesex County
Public Schools

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To: School Board Members
From: James Lane, Assistant Superintendent
Date: February 14, 2011
Re: Executive Summary of Climate Survey Results

Climate Surveys were delivered at each school to faculty/staff, students, parents, and community members through various timeframes from November 2010 to January 2011. We have included a full report of the survey data over 130 pages in your February 2011 school board packet beginning on page 113. Additionally, we plan to post these results on the MCPS website beginning Tuesday, February 15, 2011, for all stakeholders to have an opportunity to view the results.

Due to the lengthy nature of the survey report, we are composing this executive summary to highlight some of the major findings of the survey. Internally, we have completed a thorough analysis of each question and have worked individually with principals to analyze the specific data for their school. Additionally, we have taken the time in our leadership meetings with principals to review the specific open-ended feedback that we received about how to improve our school program and how to improve individually as leaders. The information that we have learned from this survey has already been invaluable in helping us to refocus our division and school improvement needs and will certainly guide us as we begin the process of creating a new 5-year comprehensive plan for our school division within the next school year.

This executive summary includes only some of the information that we have learned from the surveys and we encourage readers to delve more specifically into the actual numerical results for more detail after reading this summary. Whereas there are numerous positive sections and areas to be proud, most of our comments below focus on the areas that we believe we need to grow the most based on the data.

Faculty/Staff

- Overall, results indicate that faculty/staff at St. Clare Walker are most satisfied with the climate at their school; faculty/staff at Middlesex High School are the least satisfied with the climate in their school. Nearly every item in the survey has a significant numerical difference.
- It is evident that teachers feel that they treat students with respect at all schools (4.09 out of 5) and that the schools are caring and supportive (3.94).
- Based on the numerical data in addition to written feedback, morale is low across the division (2.37 out of 5) largely due to the fact that faculty/staff has not received a compensation increase for two consecutive years. Teachers feel as though they are being asked to do more for less money.
- Teachers feel that our division is strong in the core academic areas (4.10, 4.10, 4.13, and 4.18, respectively).
- Discipline is an area of concern at MHS more so than at other schools (MHS 2.0 vs. SCW 3.68 and MES 3.07).
- The 2nd set of questions in the survey are known as the Gallup Q12 and seek information about employees' engagement with their work, which could be a predictor of quality and/or productivity. Overall, teachers' feedback indicate that they are engaged with their work, but do not feel that they are receiving praise for good work in a timely manner (2.85).

- A 1-to-1 computer initiative only trends slightly positively, and there is little trust in our infrastructure at this time. Written comments indicate that if the survey targeted older students (rather than beginning with grade 3), there would be greater support for this initiative.
- Perceptions of school-based administrators trend slightly positively (3.57 division-wide average). The administration at SCW is viewed the most favorably (4.41). The greatest area of improvement could be improving the quality of required meetings (2.91).
- Whereas the rates about division administration tend slightly positively (3.31), the greatest area of improvement should focus on division administration understanding the needs of individuals working in the schools (2.91).
- The overall rating is slightly skewed when comparing it to other indicators in the survey. All items previously were based on a five-point scale, whereas the overall results are based on a four-point scale. In other words, the overall division rating is 2.85 of our 4, thus the trend indicates that the overall teachers experience with the division is “Good.”

Again, there is a large amount of data that we gathered about school uniforms, funding, pay scales, specific programs, etc.; however, please refer to the survey for this data as this document only hopes to summarize major areas of emphasis.

Students

All students at SCW and a sample from MHS completed this survey. Elementary students were not surveyed.

- Students indicate that bullying is a problem in the schools.
- Overall students at SCW are more satisfied than students at MHS.
- Students do not feel like their peers show respect for students who are different than they are.
- Most of the questions in the 2nd section indicate that students have “middle of the road answers” about their feelings at school. An interesting trend is that students tend to agree that they are responsible for their own work and that doing well in school makes them feel good about themselves (4.0 out of 5), but their trend indicates (3.57 out of 5) that not all students are doing their best in school. A lower amount than expected felt like they were challenged in school (2.97 out of 5).
- Overall students at SCW feel more positively about their teachers than the students at MHS. A trend of 2.58 out of 5 indicates that students tend to disagree that MHS teachers make learning fun. Teachers do, however, expect students to do their best (3.94 out of 5).
- Students feel like they work best in a small group and their least favorite type of work is research/projects.
- Students feel like our division is strongest in social studies (4.12) and athletics (4.12), and weakest in Career and Technical Education (3.13) and Foreign Languages (2.93).
- Students are not interested in school uniforms.
- Students tend to agree that a 1-to-1 environment is appropriate in lieu of textbooks, but also shared comments about beginning this initiative with older students.
- Again, the overall experience results are different than other questions and are on a four-point scale. Overall, students feel “good” about their school.

Parents

Due to low turnout – 55 of approximately 1175 total respondents, we would need more data to accurately analyze this data. The major information that we learned from this data is that we will have to find another way to reach our parents. We invited parents by instant alert, by letter, and even opened our schools on conference night in case they did not have internet access. Furthermore, we offered them the opportunity to

receive a paper copy. In future versions of this survey we will likely have to incentivize parents to increase participation. Here are some items that stand out:

- Parent results indicate that their overall experience with the division is “good” (2.90 out of 4).
- Parents indicated a willingness to become more involved to help their children succeed (4.38 out of 5)
- Parents, similar to teachers, indicated that MHS is not as inviting a place as other schools (MHS 3.0 vs. SCW 4.06 and MES 4.12), likely due to the age of the building and lack of renovation in the East Wing.
- Parents at MHS indicate that there is a lack of quality programs (2.65) as compared to other schools.
- Communication is an area of strength at all three schools (4.04), especially Instant Alert (4.53).
- Administrators respond to parents in a timely manner (3.87)

Community

Similar to parent results, we only had 29 community respondents and will have to work to incentivize participation in the future to receive a more accurate reflection of the community’s perceptions of our schools.

- MHS has a significantly lower perception in the community than the division or other two schools.
- Respondents “neither agree nor disagree” about whether MCPS manages funding in an appropriate manner (2.86).
- Respondents leaned slightly towards disagreeing that MCPS receives appropriate funding from the locality (2.69) or the state (2.55). These results are nearly halfway between “Neither Agree Nor Disagree” and “Disagree.” Nearly 50% of respondents indicated that MCPS does not receive appropriate funding from these sources.